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A

Ph.D. Final Synopsis on

An Exploratory Study of Social Media Marketing in the Automotive Industry in India.

In

Management & Commerce

By

Ranjeet Kakkad

Under the Guidance of

Dr. Gurdip Singh

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Final Synopsis.

Introduction

Welcome to the final synopsis submission on "An Exploratory Study of Social Media Marketing in the Automotive Industry in India." This research delves into the dynamic role of social media in shaping marketing strategies within the two-wheeler industry, with a focus on user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and emerging technologies like AR and VR. Through this study, we aim to understand how social media marketing influences consumer decisions, brand perception, and dealer engagement, providing valuable insights for industry professionals and marketers. The findings will help bridge existing gaps and offer strategic recommendations for optimizing marketing efforts in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

Research Problem:

The two-wheeler industry in India has seen rapid growth, but the role of social media marketing in influencing consumer behavior, enhancing brand visibility, and impacting sales performance is not well understood. Despite the increasing use of digital platforms for marketing, there is limited research on how effective social media marketing strategies are for two wheeler brands and dealerships in different tier cities of India.

Objectives of the Study.

1. To review the concept of social media marketing and its effectiveness in the case of selected brands in India, according to a category of two wheelers.

2. To assess and quantify the influence of user-generated content, in the form of, customer reviews and shared experiences on social media; versus traditional advertising methods on the purchasing decisions of two-wheeler buyers.

3. To study the engagement rates (likes, shares, comments) resulting from collaborations with social media influencers within the two-wheeler industry and other forms of social media marketing campaigns, such as Analyze Audience Perception and Interest.

4. To evaluate the impact of video content, including Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) content, on social media platforms in enhancing brand perception and make recommendations for their effectiveness.

5. To assess the effectiveness of social media analytics and targeted advertising in segmenting the two-wheeler market based on specific customer segments (young adults, professionals, adventure enthusiasts, etc and evaluating the accuracy and precision of segmentation strategies employed by companies. (Objective for manager / professionals)

6. To investigate how two-wheeler dealers utilize marketing channels, including social media marketing to enhance brand visibility, customer engagement, and sales performance & suggest a line of action for enhancing use of social media marketing.

7. To examine how brand managers and marketing professionals utilise social media platforms for promoting and enhancing brand presence within the two-wheeler industry.

Significance of the Study:

This study holds significant importance for various stakeholders, including students, two-wheeler brands, and all other stakeholders in the two-wheeler industry , media and marketing staff as well as Researchers, this study opens up new avenues for research in the field of two-wheeler marketing and social media marketing in India. This study can also benefit consumers by highlighting the impact of social media marketing on their perceptions and buying decisions.

Industry Insight: Understanding how two-wheeler brands utilize social media marketing provides valuable insights into the evolving marketing landscape within the automotive industry.

Marketing Strategies: Analyzing the key strategies and tactics employed by two-wheeler brands in their social media marketing campaigns offers practical insights for marketers and brand managers.
Effectiveness Assessment: Investigating the evidence supporting the effectiveness of social media marketing for two-wheeler brands in terms of brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion helps in evaluating the return on investment (ROI) of digital marketing efforts. This information is crucial for optimizing marketing budgets and resource allocation.
Brand Recall and Consumer Behavior: Comparing the influence of social media marketing and traditional marketing strategies on brand recall and consumer behavior provides valuable insights into the changing dynamics of consumer preferences and purchasing decisions.

Integrated Marketing Approach: Exploring the synergies between social media and traditional marketing methods and their combined impact on brand recall and consumer behavior highlights the importance of adopting an integrated marketing approach. This understanding can guide brands in developing cohesive and coordinated marketing strategies across multiple channels.

As a central feature of their digital strategy, companies made huge bets on what is often called branded content. The thinking went like this, social media would allow companies to leapfrog traditional media and forge relationships directly with customers. In this context this study makes its own contribution.

Literature Review

Key Theories:

- Consumer Behavior Theory: This study explores how digital content influences purchasing decisions and brand perception.
- Social Media Engagement Theory: The research focuses on the dynamic interaction between brands and consumers via digital platforms, emphasizing user-generated content and influencer marketing.

- Marketing Funnel Theory: The impact of different marketing strategies (influencer collaborations, video content, personalized ads) on various stages of the customer journey is assessed.
- Research Gaps: Research gaps in social media marketing of two wheelers in Indian context.

Social media marketing has become an essential tool for businesses to connect with their customers, build their brand, and increase their revenue. However, there are still significant gaps in social media marketing that need to be addressed. This study examines some of these gaps and offers suggestions for how they can be filled. These gaps include the lack of measurement standards, inadequate targeting capabilities, and the limited ability to engage with customers on a personal level. ‘By addressing these gaps, businesses can create more effective social media marketing strategies and better connect with their customers’ said Mr. Bhavin Joshi & Mr. Prashant Kachela. (16)

There have been several studies conducted on gaps in social media marketing. One notable research article is "The Gap between Social Media Marketing and Reality, an Empirical Study in the United States" by Yogesh D, Elvira I. (17). The study aimed to investigate the gaps between social media marketing practices and their actual effects on consumer behaviour in the United States. The results of the study showed that there were significant gaps between social media marketing practices and their actual effects on consumer behavior. For example, while social media was found to be an effective tool for building brand awareness and creating a positive brand image, The study found that many social media marketing practices were not aligned with consumers' preferences and needs. For instance, consumers preferred authentic and informative content rather than promotional messages and advertisements. As such this study highlights the importance of aligning social media marketing practices with consumers' preferences and needs to achieve effective outcomes.

One of the gaps in social media marketing research is the lack of understanding of the role of social media influencers in promoting products and brands. While there is considerable research on the effectiveness of social media marketing in general, there is limited research on how the use of influencers affects consumer behavior a study found that consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from social media influencers than from brands themselves. However, more research is needed to determine the specific factors that influence the effectiveness of influencer

marketing, such as the type of product being promoted, the influencer's perceived authenticity, and the level of engagement with followers.

The study tried to handle the limited rationality by including three perspectives, namely the influencer’s perspective, the follower’s perspective and the brand’s perspective. (18)

Another gap in social media marketing research is the limited understanding of how to measure the return on investment (ROI) of social media marketing efforts. While many businesses are investing significant resources in social media marketing, there is a lack of consensus on the best metrics to use to measure the effectiveness of these efforts. To address this gap, more research is needed to develop metrics that can accurately measure the ROI of social media marketing efforts, including both direct and indirect effects. When calculating social media ROI, many marketers typically begin by assessing the cost of launching a blog and then aim to quantify the return on sales resulting from that social media investment. However, an alternative approach involves considering the marketing objectives a blog could fulfill (such as enhancing brand engagement), understanding why customers might visit the blog (perhaps to learn about new products), and predicting the behaviors they might exhibit once on the blog (such as commenting on a recent consumption experience). These behaviors can be linked back to the company's marketing objectives, providing a more holistic view of social media's impact. (19).

The emergence of digital platforms has revolutionized marketing strategies across industries. However, in the realm of two-wheeler marketing, there is a notable gap in understanding the true effectiveness and ROI of various digital marketing initiatives. Studies evaluating the impact of social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and content strategies on consumer engagement and conversion rates are lacking.

Research Methodology:

Research Design:

Design: This research follows a **mixed-method approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative data. It incorporates exploratory, descriptive, and correlational methods to examine social media marketing's effectiveness on two-wheeler buyers and dealers across Maharashtra.

Sampling:

Survey of 2014 two-wheeler buyers: Stratified sampling was used to include respondents from Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 cities.

- Survey of 51 two-wheeler dealers from a total of 486 dealers in Maharashtra.
- Interviews with 9 marketing professionals and representatives from five selected brands (Bajaj, Honda, Hero, Suzuki, TVS).

Data Collection:

The Data Collection process for gathering information thru questionnaires from two-wheeler buyers, two-wheeler dealers, two-wheeler marketing managers & interviews of marketing professionals from agencies form the primary data sources. Here are some common Data collection technics used for primary & secondary data collection of this study.

Primary Data Collection Thru questionnaires:

A. Two-Wheeler Buyers questionnaire was designed & distributed online & offline to survey 3014 sample buyers to gather information about their preferences, buying behavior, satisfaction levels & usage pattern

B. Two-wheeler Dealer's Thru questionnaire:

- The predetermined Questionnaires were canvased to survey sample 51 Dealership Owners or Managers to gather information about sales trends, customer preferences, marketing strategies & Challenges they faced in promoting two wheelers' sales.

- Site Visits: - Some site visits were paid to sample dealers ships to observe the sales process, interact with dealers & gather firsthand information about their practices , experiences & perspectives.

C. Two-wheeler Brand Marketing Manager's Thru questionnaire:

A set of Questionnaires were delivered to survey 5 sample brand marketing managers to gather insights on their social media marketing strategies, budget allocations, campaign effectiveness & key performance indicators.

Focus Group Interviews of Professionals:

- These interviews & Discussions were held thru interview schedule (as given in appendices at he end of this script) with 9 marketing professionals as experts to delve deeper into their decision-making processes, challenges & perception of the effectiveness of social media marketing in the two-wheeler industry.

- B. Secondary Data Collection thru academic literatures and Records :

- This process of secondary data collection was initiated at ease by referring the sources such as various books, articles in journals & News Papers, Case studies, Websites, Different types of Records of the sample brands & sample social media platforms use by the brands under references.

Analytical Tools:

- Descriptive and inferential statistical tools like cross-tabulations, correlation analysis, and regression models were used to analyze the data.
- Visual aids such as charts, tables, and graphs were created for presenting key insights.

Data Analysis:

Data Analysis & Key Findings

Age and Gender Analysis:

- Majority of respondents were from the 26-35 age group (619 respondents).
- Male buyers (1491) significantly outnumbered female buyers (523).

Income & City Tier Analysis:

- The largest income group was those earning less than ₹300,000 annually (773 respondents).

- A majority of respondents were from Tier 2 cities (919 respondents).

Influence of Social Media Marketing:

- 54.2% of buyers were influenced by friends or family recommendations.
- 13.1% were influenced by social media ads, which were more effective than print (8.4%) but less than TV commercials (20.1%).

Impact of Influencer Collaborations:

- Engagement rates were higher for brands collaborating with social media influencers (489 respondents) compared to other strategies.

Brand Identification:

- Personalized marketing through social media improved brand identification for Honda (539 respondents) and Bajaj (347 respondents).

Discussion:

1. **Primary Data Findings.** Two-Wheeler Buyer Survey: The findings from the Two-Wheeler Buyer Survey offer valuable insights into consumer behavior in the digital age. The clear preference for specific social media platforms highlights the need for targeted marketing efforts. Brands can optimize their strategies by focusing on platforms that resonate most with their target audience. The influence of user-generated content reaffirms the impact of peer opinions, suggesting that building a positive online reputation through reviews and testimonials is a key aspect of successful marketing in the two-wheeler industry.

Moreover, the revelation that buyers engage more with brands active on social media underscores the importance of brands being proactive and responsive in their online presence. This presents an opportunity for companies to enhance customer relationships, gather feedback, and gain a better understanding of consumer preferences. This survey reinforces the idea that a robust social media strategy is not just about visibility but active engagement with potential customers.

2. Two-Wheeler Dealer Survey: The Two-Wheeler Dealer Survey sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by dealerships in the digital landscape. Acknowledging the importance of a strong digital presence aligns with the changing consumer landscape, emphasising the need for dealers to adapt and invest in online platforms. The challenges faced in converting online engagement into actual sales highlight a gap that requires attention. Dealerships may benefit from developing more effective online-to-offline strategies to seamlessly guide potential customers through the purchasing journey.

The emphasis on collaboration with two-wheeler brands in social media campaigns is noteworthy. It suggests that partnerships between dealers and brands can be mutually beneficial, increasing visibility and building customer trust. Collaborative efforts in marketing campaigns can leverage the strengths of both parties, creating a more comprehensive and impactful digital presence.

3. Two-Wheeler Marketing Manager Survey: Key Findings: Integration of Channels: Marketing managers emphasize the importance of integrated marketing strategies, combining both online and offline channels.
Metrics for Success: Engagement metrics, conversion rates, and brand sentiment are crucial for assessing the success of social media campaigns.
Future Trends: Anticipation of the growing significance of video content and interactive features on social media for effective marketing.

Secondary data findings.

There are following key market players in the two-wheeler industry.

- Hero MotoCorp
- Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India
- Yamaha motor
- Royal Enfield
- Bajaj Auto
- TVS Motor Company

- Suzuki Motorcycle India, Private Limited
- Piaggio vehicles Pvt ltd
- Hero Electric
- Okinawa
- Ola
- Ather
- Kinectic

One key secondary finding is the broader industry context provided by academic literature and industry reports. Understanding the historical evolution, trends, and challenges within the two-wheeler industry in India allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the primary findings. It helps in placing the effectiveness of social media marketing within the broader landscape of marketing strategies employed by companies in the region.

Moreover, the secondary data can contribute to the theoretical framework of the study by aligning the research with established marketing theories and concepts. It allows for a more robust theoretical foundation, enhancing the credibility and academic rigour of the research. Findings on Category-wise Two-Wheeler Sales Trends in India (2018-19 to 2022-23):

Category-wise two-wheeler sales trends in India from 2018-19 to 2022-23.

Category-wise two-wheeler sales trends in India from 2018-19 to 2022-23 reveal dynamic patterns across motorcycle, scooter, and moped segments. Motorcycle sales showed fluctuations but trended downward overall, with a notable drop in 2021-22 followed by a significant increase in 2022-23. Scooter sales also experienced fluctuations, consistently declining from 2018-19 to 2021-22, with a slight uptick in 2022-23 but still below 2018-19 levels. Moped sales demonstrated mixed trends, showing relative stability with slight variations. These trends underscore the need for manufacturers and dealers to closely monitor and adapt to changing market dynamics influenced by various factors like economic conditions and consumer preferences to formulate informed strategies for the future.

Marketing Trends: Two-wheeler sales 2011- 2023.

Overall Trend: The data shows fluctuations in two-wheeler sales over the years, with periods of growth followed by declines and vice versa. From 2012 to 2018, there was a general upward trend, with sales consistently increasing each year, reaching a peak of 21.17 million units in 2019. However, from 2019 onwards, there was a reversal in this trend, with sales declining in 2020 and 2021 before experiencing a slight recovery in 2023.

Future Outlook: The future trajectory of two-wheeler sales in India will depend on various factors, including economic recovery post-pandemic, government policies, technological advancements (such as electric vehicles), and consumer preferences.
With India being a significant market for two-wheelers, manufacturers are likely to continue investing in the market despite short-term fluctuations, banking on the long-term growth potential.

In conclusion, India's two-wheeler sales have shown a mix of growth and decline over the years, influenced by economic, regulatory, and market factors. Understanding these trends and factors is crucial for stakeholders in the industry to formulate effective strategies and navigate the evolving market landscape.

The market share trends of leading motorcycle brands from 2019 to 2023, let's break down the data and discuss the changes:

Hero:

Change: Decreased by 3.8%

Hero, despite being the market leader in both years, experienced a decrease in market share over the period. This could be due to various factors such as increased competition, changing consumer preferences, or strategic shifts by competitors.

Honda:

Change: Decreased by 0.9%

Honda also experienced a slight decrease in market share. While the drop is less significant compared to Hero, it still indicates a slight erosion in their dominance within the market.

TVS:

2019: 14.8%

2023: 16.2%

Change: Increased by 1.4%

TVS saw an increase in market share, positioning itself as the brand with the highest growth rate among the leading brands. This could be attributed to successful product launches, effective marketing strategies, or improved customer satisfaction.

Bajaj:

Change: Decreased by 0.7%

Bajaj experienced a slight decline in market share, albeit not as significant as Hero. This could reflect challenges in maintaining their market position amidst competition and changing market dynamics.

Suzuki:

Change: Increased by 1.3%

Suzuki exhibited the highest growth rate in market share among the leading brands. While starting from a smaller base, this increase indicates a positive response from consumers towards Suzuki's offerings or strategies.

Impact of External Factors: External factors such as economic conditions, regulatory changes, and technological advancements can influence market dynamics and subsequently impact market shares. Brands need to be agile and responsive to such changes to maintain or improve their positions.

In conclusion, while Hero and Honda still lead the motorcycle market, the landscape is dynamic, with shifts in market share among the leading brands. TVS and Suzuki's growth demonstrates the potential for brands to gain traction through effective strategies and responsiveness to consumer demands.

Internet users in India.

The trends in the number of internet users in India from 2017 to 2023 by region (urban and rural) based on the provided data:

Overall Trend: The data shows a consistent increase in the number of internet users in both urban and rural regions of India over the years.
Despite fluctuations in growth rates, the trend indicates a steady rise in internet penetration across both urban and rural areas.

Urban vs. Rural Growth: Urban areas consistently have a higher number of internet users compared to rural areas, reflecting factors such as infrastructure, access to technology, and socioeconomic factors.

However, rural areas have been catching up, with significant growth rates observed, narrowing the gap between urban and rural internet penetration over the years.

Factors Influencing Growth: Infrastructure Development: Investments in telecommunications infrastructure, such as expanding mobile networks and internet connectivity, have contributed to increased internet access in both urban and rural areas.

Government Initiatives: Government programs aimed at promoting digital literacy, such as Digital India, have played a crucial role in driving internet adoption, particularly in rural regions.

Mobile Penetration: The widespread availability of affordable smartphones and data plans has made internet access more accessible to a larger segment of the population, especially in rural areas.

Socio-economic Factors: Factors such as income levels, education, and awareness also influence internet adoption rates, with urban areas typically having higher levels of these factors compared to rural areas.

Future Outlook: The trend of increasing internet penetration is likely to continue in the coming years, driven by ongoing infrastructure development, government initiatives, and the growing demand for digital services.

However, challenges such as digital literacy, affordability, and connectivity in remote rural areas may need to be addressed to ensure more inclusive growth in internet access across the country.

The data highlights the significant growth in internet users in both urban and rural regions of India over the past few years, with implications for various sectors and opportunities for further development and inclusion in the digital economy.

Social Media Engagement.

Honda leads with the highest number of followers, surpassing 5 million as contained in chapter number 1. TVS, Suzuki, and other companies follow with varying follower counts. This frequency ensures regular interaction and content updates for their followers. Engagement Rates: Honda and TVS exhibit the highest engagement rates among the observed companies. Suzuki, however, lags behind with the lowest engagement rate. The engagement rate serves as a crucial metric indicating the effectiveness of content in capturing audience attention and interaction.

Instagram Engagement.

Honda leads with the highest number of followers, exceeding 750,000.
TVS follows closely with over 600,000 followers. Bajaj, Suzuki, and Hero also contribute to a significant combined following on Instagram, totalling over 2 million as continued in chapter number 1. Honda and Hero stand out with the highest engagement rates, indicating strong resonance with their audience. Suzuki records the lowest engagement rate among the observed companies on Instagram.

YouTube Engagement.

Subscriber Counts: Honda leads among the observed companies with the largest subscriber count, exceeding 1 million subscribers on its YouTube channel. Hero, Bajaj, Suzuki, and TVS also maintain YouTube channels, contributing to the digital presence of these automotive brands. Video Posting Frequency: Companies maintain a consistent presence on YouTube by posting videos regularly, averaging 1-2 videos per week. This regularity ensures a steady stream of content for subscribers and viewers, enhancing engagement opportunities.

LinkedIn Audience Representation:

LinkedIn's advertising reach in India represented 7.0 percent of the total population at the beginning of 2023. Considering LinkedIn's age restriction of 18 and above, 10.0 percent of the eligible audience in India utilized LinkedIn in 2023. This indicates a significant portion of the population actively engaging with professional networking and content on LinkedIn.

X (Twitter) Engagement.

Honda leads with the highest number of followers, surpassing 140,000. TVS follows closely with over 100,000 followers. Bajaj, Suzuki, and Hero also maintain a presence on X, albeit with lower follower counts compared to Facebook & Instagram. This reduced frequency suggests a different approach to content strategy on X, possibly focusing on quality over quantity.

Contribution:

Theoretical Contributions: This study contributes to the literature on consumer behavior and digital marketing by providing a nuanced understanding of how social media marketing impacts the two-wheeler industry. It highlights the relevance of social media engagement theories in the automotive sector.

Practical Contributions: The research offers actionable insights for two-wheeler brands and dealerships, emphasizing the importance of influencer collaborations, video content, and personalized marketing in enhancing brand visibility and driving sales.

Conclusion

This exploratory study on social media marketing within the automotive industry, specifically focusing on two-wheelers in India, highlights the transformative role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior and brand interactions. The findings reveal that social media not only serves as a critical tool for brand promotion but also facilitates a two-way communication channel that fosters customer engagement and loyalty.

The research underscores the significance of user-generated content, influencer collaborations, and high-quality video production in enhancing brand perception and driving purchasing decisions.

Additionally, the study identifies gaps in personalized marketing approaches and the need for improved measurement standards for return on investment (ROI) in social media marketing efforts.

As the automotive landscape evolves, two-wheeler brands must prioritize an integrated marketing strategy that combines digital and traditional media to effectively engage diverse consumer segments across various city tiers. The insights gained from this research serve as a valuable resource for marketers and industry professionals, providing actionable recommendations for optimizing social media marketing strategies and improving overall brand visibility and customer engagement.

In summary, the research highlights the potential of social media marketing to revolutionize the two-wheeler industry in India, paving the way for innovative strategies that resonate with today's digitally-savvy consumers.

Key Findings:

- Social media marketing, particularly influencer collaborations and personalized ads, plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior.
- Tier 2 cities represent significant growth potential for two-wheeler brands.
- Younger buyers (26-35) are more responsive to digital marketing, making them a key target for future campaigns.

Recommendations:

- Brands should invest more in influencer marketing and tailored video content to attract urban buyers.
- Dealers should focus on localized digital campaigns to boost engagement in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Limitations & Future Scope Limitations:

1. Scope of Social Media Platforms: The study does not explore the varying effectiveness of specific social media platforms, which could provide more nuanced insights.

2. Influence of External Factors: Factors like economic changes, regulatory shifts, or technological advancements were not fully considered, potentially impacting the findings on social media effectiveness.

3. Social media platforms are constantly evolving, and the study may not fully capture recent trends.

Future Research:

- Future studies could explore social media marketing's impact on other regions and vehicle segments.

- Investigating the long-term effects of social media marketing strategies on brand loyalty would offer additional insights.

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Ranjeet Kakkad — (Research Scholar)

Prof. Dr. Gurdip Singh — (Research Guide)